

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-15 IO-13

AID-20 PC-04 OMB-01 RSR-01 /122 W

----- 088842

R 301025Z JUL 73

FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6930

INFO CINCPAC

CINCPACREPPHIL

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS/PGOV, PINT, RP

SUBJECT: INITIAL RESULTS OF BARANGAY REFERENDUM ON EXTENSION
OF TENURE OF PRESIDENT MARCOS

REF: MANILA 8203 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: INITIAL RESULTS OF BARANGAY REFERENDUM JULY 27/28
ON CONTINUED TENURE OF PRESIDENT MARCOS BEYOND 1973
ANNOUNCED AS SHOWING 84 PERCENT YES IN MANILA AREA AND
AN ALMOST 95 PERCENT YES TREND ELSEWHERE. GOVERNMENT
MANAGEMENT OF ELECTION PROCESS, INCLUDING INFORMATION
CAMPAIGN PRECEDING IT, VERY OBVIOUS. EARLIER JULY 21/22
BARANGAY CONSULTATIONS PREPARATORY TO REFERENDUM HAVE BEEN
REPORTED AS RECOMMENDING ESTABLISHMENT OF PRESIDENTIALLY
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APPOINTED LEGISLATIVE ADVISORY COUNCIL AND REJECTING

CATEGORICALLY PETITION BY GROUP OF DISTINGUISHED CITIZENS TO LIFE
MARTIAL LAW AND DELAY REFERENDUM. END SUMMARY.

1. PRELIMINARY REPORTS OF RESULTS OF THE JULY 27/28 BARANGAY REFERENDUM ON QUESTION "DO YOU WANT PRESIDENT MARCOS TO CONTINUE BEYOND 1973 AND FINISH THE REFORMS HE HAS INITIATED UNDER MARTIAL LAW?" INDICATE PRESIDENT HAS RECEIVED OVERWHELMING NEW MANDATE WITH ABOUT 84 PERCENT VOTING YES IN THE MANILA AREA AND ALMOST 95 PERCENT YES VOTE EXPECTED FROM THE PROVINCES. VOTER TURNOUT WAS REPORTED TO BE HEAVY AND INCLUDED 15-18 AGE GROUP. FINAL RESULTS NOT EXPECTED TO BE AVAILABLE UNTIL AUGUST 3.

2. UNIQUE FEATURE WAS ADDED TO REFERENDUM BALLOT IN FORM OF A "REMARK SHEET." THIS SHEET, WAS TO ALLOW THE VOTER TO EXPLAIN HIS VOTE AND TO MAKE COMMENTS OR RECOMMENDATIONS. PRESS PLACED EMPHASIS ON "REMARK SHEETS" AS A GUIDE TO MARCOS IN FUTURE POLICIES AND DECISIONS. COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS (COMELEC) STATED THAT RESULTS OF "REMARKS" EXERCISE, IF ANY, WOULD ONLY BE DISCERNIBLE AFTER THEIR CLASSIFICATION AND STUDY BY EXPERTS. THE JULY 27 BALLOTING WAS EXTENDED TO INCLUDE JULY 28, IN TARDY REALIZATION OF CONFUSION CAUSED AT POLLING PLACE BY CUMBERSOME VOTING PROCESS AS WELL AS INCOMPLETE AND DISORGANIZED REGISTRATION SYSTEM.

3. EARLIER BARANGAY CONSULTATIONS TO PREPARE FOR REFERENDUM WERE HELD ON JULY 21/22 WITH INDICATIONS THAT THEY WERE FAIRLY POORLY ATTENDED DESPITE HEAVY PUBLICITY. SO FAR, NO FORMAL RESULTS OF THESE MEETINGS HAVE BEEN ANNOUNCED SIMILAR TO POSITIONS ON VARIOUS QUESTIONS ALLEGEDLY TAKEN BY JANUARY "CITIZENS ASSEMBLIES." PRESS REPORTS MAKE IT CLEAR, HOWEVER, THAT BARANGAYS FAVOR APPOINTMENT BY PARESIDENT MARCOS OF A LEGISLATIVE ADVISORY COUNCIL (LAC) WHOSE MEMBERS WOULD NOT NECESSARILY BE DRAWN FROM MEMBERSHIP OF INTERIM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. RECOMMENDATION THAT LAC BE GIVEN POWER TO DEAL WITH QUESTION OF PRESIDENTIAL SUCCESSION IN CASE OF EMERGENCY WAS SUPPOSED TO HAVE EMERGED FROM THESE MEETINGS (REFTEL) BUT NO SUCH REACTIONS REPORTED THUS FAR.

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4. A LAST MINUTE FLURRY WAS CAUSED BY LETTER TO PRESIDENT MARCOS, RELEASED TO INTERNATIONAL WIRE SERVICES, FROM 12 DISTINGUISHED CITIZENS INCLUDING FORMER OPPOSITION LIBERAL PARTY SENATORS JOVITO SALONGA AND FRANCISCO RODRIGO, FORMER MANILA TIMES, PUBLISHER, CHINO ROCES, AND NUMBER OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS AND EDUCATORS. THE LETTER SUGGESTED
(1) LIFTING OF MARTIAL LAW AT LEAST ONE MONTH BEFORE THE REFERENDUM, ARGUING THAT MARCOS' OWN RECENT STATEMENTS ON

SECURITY SUPPORTED SUCH AND ACTION, (2) A DELAY IN REFERENDUM AS NECESSARY TO ACHIEVE THIS, (3) THE FORMULATION OF A MORE UNDERSTANDABLE QUESTION; I.E. "DO YOU WANT PRESIDENT MARCOS TO STAY IN POWER BEYOND 1973?" AND (4) ENTRUSTMENT OF SUPERVISION OF THE ELECTION TO AN INDEPENDENT COMMITTEE OF CITIZENS RATHER THAN TO NEWLY "PACKED" COMELEC HEADED BY LOYAL MARCOS FOLLOWER SENATOR LEONARDO PEREZ.

5. IN SKILLFUL MANEUVER, MARCOS ALLOWED REPORT OF PETITION TO BE CARRIED IN PHILIPPINE PRESS, AND IN RESPONSE, LIFTED THE CURFEW (BUT NOT MARITAL LAW), ALSO SIGNING ORDER PROVIDING FOR FREE DISCUSSION OF THE REFERENDUM ISSUES WHILE HOLDING INDIVIDUALS IMMUNE FROM SUBSEQUENT PROSECUTION FOR STATEMENTS MADE IN THIS CONTEXT (THOUGH BULLETIN TODAY REPORTED SED INFO TATAD AS SAYING THIS DID NOT MEAN PREVIOUS ORDER BANNING RUMOR MONGERING HAD BEEN SUPERSEDED). JULY 21/22 BARANGAY CONSULTATIONS WERE REPORTED THEN TO HAVE QUICKLY DISPOSED OF THIS ISSUE BY OVERWHELMINGLY REJECTING DELAY OF REFERENDUM AND OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS AS UNNECESSARY AND UNDESIRABLE.

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6. COMMENT: FOR ALL ITS APPARENT CONFUSION IN THE REGISTRATION PROCESS, IN THE PRELIMINARY BARANGAY CONSULTATIONS, AND FINALLY IN THE BALLOTING ITSELF, REFERENDUM AND PRIOR PROPAGANDA BUILDUP IN PRESS AND RADIO/TV WAS SKILLFULLY STAGE-MANAGED TO OBTAIN OPEN-ENDED MANDATE FOR PRESIDENT MARCOS TO CONTINUE HIS PERSONAL RULE OVER PHILIPPINES. VERY PROBABLY MOST FILIPINOS NOT TAKEN IN BY REFERENDUM PROCEDURES, BUT DUE TO LACK OF ANY ORGANIZED OPPOSITION OR, INDEED, ANY ALTERNATIVE TO MARCOS REGIME, ACCEPTED OUTCOME PHILOSOPHICALLY. PRINCIPAL MARTIAL LAW ACCOMPLISHMENT OF IMPOSING LAW AND ORDER ON HITHERTO INCREASINGLY VIOLENT SOCIETY WOULD PROBABLY HAVE GAINED MARCOS MAJORITY SUPPORT, ANYWAY, BUT BOTH SENSITIVITY OF PRESIDENT TO POPULAR ACCLAIM AND ALREADY DEMONSTRATED PENCHANT FOR POLITICAL OVERKILL SEEM TO HAVE DICTATED OVER 90 PERCENT YES RESULTS. OTHER ELEMENTS, SUCH AS VOTER CONCERN THAT BALLOT NUMBERING COULD BE USED TO TRACE NO VOTERS AS WELL AS REPORTS THAT WARNINGS ISSUED EVEN IN POLLING PLACES RE CONSEQUENCES OF NO VOTES, ALSO HELPED SWELL TOTAL. HOWEVER, WHILE OUTCOME

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OF REFERENDUM HAD BEEN VIEWED AS FOREGONE CONCLUSION, ITS POTENTIAL SIGNIFICANCE AS A BENCHMARK IN CONSOLIDATING PERSONAL REGIME ESTABLISHED BY MARCOS IN JANUARY SHOULD NOT BE OVERLOOKED.

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